

The Selectmen appointed an Ad Hoc Sign Bylaw Review Committee (SBRC) to review the town's Sign Bylaw and develop recommendations to update the document. The committee evolved as a result of the 2009 review of the Town Charter and General Bylaws, during which time it was noted that there were numerous issues with the Sign Bylaw that required updating. The Ad Hoc Town Charter and General Bylaws Review Committee recommended that the Selectmen appoint a committee to address this matter. The Ad Hoc Sign Bylaw Review Committee was appointed in fall of 2011 and has been holding public meetings that commenced in January, 2012.

Rather than rewrite/recodify the entire Bylaw from scratch, the SBRC decided to focus on amending the current document to address the following deficiencies:

- 1) Amend the confusing language/ambiguities to make the Bylaw easier to interpret and understand, and more specifically, clarify the sections of the Bylaw that the ZBA typically struggles to interpret.
- 2) Change the one-size-fits-all approach to signage and provide new Zoning District-specific requirements in recognition of the fact that what is appropriate for signage in Business/Commercial districts is not necessarily effective in Industrial districts.
- 3) Make the Sign Bylaw more business-friendly while respecting Bedford's aesthetic character. Feedback from business owners, both currently located in Bedford and some that are no longer located in town, indicated that the Sign Bylaw is hampering their ability to attract customers/clients to their places of business.

The SBRC has met in-person with and/or received input from members of the ZBA, Historic District Commission, Planning Board, Selectmen, Town Counsel, Chamber of Commerce members, Council on Aging members, local business owners and several residents. The SBRC also compared Bedford's Sign Bylaw with those of other towns, including Concord, Lexington, Hingham, Chatham and Medford. The committee has received hundreds of comments and has given due consideration to every comment we received.

The SBRC reviewed the Sign Bylaw from cover-to cover and has proposed dozens of amendments, including, but not limited to, those presented in Articles 6 – 15 in the 2013 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. To present each proposed amendment as an individual Warrant Article would be unfeasible; therefore, Articles 6 – 15 represent a consolidated approach to presenting the higher-priority recommendations to Town Meeting. The committee will continue to work after Annual Town Meeting and return at the 2013 Special Fall Town Meeting with the remainder of our recommendations.

Attached to this report is *Table 40.1 Schedule of Sign Regulations*. This Table provides a snapshot overview of the signage requirements **that are being proposed** in Articles 6-15 to assist you to understand the amendments that are proposed. The amendments are highlighted in purple text.

Article 6: Proposes to correct numerous “housekeeping” abnormalities, including: Changing Roman numerals to Arabic numerals; deleting outdated references and verbiage; and abide by the guidance provided by Town Counsel.

Article 7: Proposes to permit barber poles to revolve and contain internal illumination.

Article 8: Proposes to modify definitions within the bylaw in response to feedback from Town Counsel as well as both residents and the business community – The modifications would exempt signs not visible from a lot's adjacent public ways from the provisions of the Sign Bylaw; Removes the size limitations on construction signs – these limitations will be outlined in the district specific section of the bylaw; Edits definition to denote what a freestanding sign is, not what it is not; Broadens the definition of moveable signs; Amends definition of Political Signs in response to input from Town Counsel; Coordinates prohibitive language for painted-on signs with other existing restrictive language in the Bylaw; Defines Traffic Signs on private property; and defines Non-Commercial Signs.

Article 9: Proposes to amend various illumination regulations - Offer more flexibility as to the types of acceptable luminaires for Illuminated Signs (LED luminaires would be acceptable to illuminate signs, but prohibited from conveying the sign message); LED luminaires may not be used as the primary means for displaying/conveying the sign message; Permit businesses open from 11 pm to 6 am to illuminate their signs after obtaining a Special Permit from the ZBA with fewer restrictions; and removes unrealistic and unenforceable criteria for illumination overspill.

Article 10: Proposes to add language which permits Non-commercial signs, freestanding or wall-mounted (regulated as temporary signs). Also proposed is a provision which exempts Traffic Control signs on private property, as authorized by an approved site plan, from the provisions of the Sign Bylaw.

Article 11: This Article adds a prohibition for moveable freestanding signs and clarifies restrictions on movable freestanding signs and internal illumination.

Article 12: Addresses changes to signage permitted in Residential Districts - The change in wall signs and freestanding signs to 6 sq. ft. brings the size of these signs in line with the currently permitted size of real estate signs in the residential districts; Permits residents to display non-commercial signs (on a temporary basis); Addresses residents' concerns regarding multiple contractor signs at construction projects, but recognizes larger signs are warranted for multi-unit or subdivision projects to allow project teams to be recognized; Permits Traffic Control Signs on private property subdivisions to permit installation of signs which will improve auto and pedestrian safety.

Article 13: Addresses changes to signage permitted in Business Districts and clarifies language to make requirements more straightforward to interpret - Allows an increase in the area of freestanding signs to be in line with current maximum height and width dimensions; Stipulates when Special Permits are required from the Zoning Board of Appeals for increases in sign area or dividing signs; Permits a larger freestanding sign on a lot with more than two businesses on-site; and Clarifies requirements for awning signs, windows signs, construction signs, real estate signs, flags, gasoline station price signs, hotel/motel vacancy signs, traffic control signs and non-commercial signs.

**AD Hoc Sign Bylaw Review Committee
Report to 2013 Annual Town Meeting**

April 1, 2013

Article 14: Removes the cross references to other zoned districts - it also carefully balances the Industrial Business Community's request to make their establishments more visible while respecting Bedford's small town aesthetic.

Article 15: This Article reflects advice from Town Counsel that Bedford may not regulate free speech signs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeff Cohen, Chair
Ad Hoc Sign Bylaw Review Committee